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FOR G/TIP, G-LAURA PENA, INL, DRL, PRM, AF/RSA

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TAGS: [KTIP](#) [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [SMIG](#) [KFRD](#) [ASEC](#) [PREF](#) [ELAB](#)  
KMCA, SL  
SUBJECT: SIERRA LEONE 2010 TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT

REF: A. A. STATE 002094  
[1](#)B. B. 09 FREETOWN 56

[1](#)1. (SBU) This report covering 2009 relies on the research done for 2008 in ref B, updating where necessary. The trafficking situation remains much as reported there. Sierra Leone ranks near or at the bottom of every global measure of poverty. Trafficking in persons thrives in such an environment. Reliable statistics do not exist. Without continuous donor support, the problem could worsen.

[1](#)2. (U) Preparation of the report was overseen by WAE political-economic officer Haywood Rankin who departs mid-February, with no replacement contemplated within months. Pol-econ assistant (FSN-10) Abdul Massally may be contacted at Tel. 232-76-515-000 ext. 5130, cell phone 232-76-661-023. WAE pol-econ officer spent 15 hours on this report, pol-econ assistant 30 hours.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Begin TIP report:

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TIP in Sierra Leone  
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[1](#)A. Sources of Information. Post relies on a number of organizations for information, including: International Organization on Migration (IOM); Faith Alliance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAAST); Center for Victims of Torture (CVT); International Rescue Committee (IRC); UNICEF; the Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP); and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MOSWGCA).

[1](#)B. Origin/Destination. The main trafficking issue in Sierra Leone is internal. Although there are no accurate statistics quantifying the extent of the problem, all indications suggest that women and children are trafficked from the provinces to towns and mining areas for prostitution, and children are trafficked from rural areas into the city and mining areas for labor, including domestic work, petty trading, portage, begging, and petty crime. Trafficking may also occur in the fishing and agricultural industries and in connection with customary practices such as forced and arranged marriages.

The incidence of international trafficking appears to be relatively small, but Sierra Leone is likely still to be a source and destination country for cross-border trafficking. Persons have been trafficked out of Sierra Leone to destinations in West Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. FAAST reported one case of attempted trafficking (adoption fraud) to the USA in 2009.

While there are no documented cases of Sierra Leone as a transit country, it continues to be a plausible assumption due to its porous, generally unmonitored borders. Fraudulent

documentation is easy to locate and inexpensive to purchase. Given the amount of goods, both legal and contraband, that pass through Sierra Leone on any given day, it is highly likely that victims from the sub-region are part of this traffic through the country.

¶C. Conditions. Many of the friends and relatives who foster children put them to work in the home, where they can also be sexually exploited, or place them on the street to engage in petty trading, portage, rock breaking or prostitution. Many of these children do not attend school, or are not enrolled until they earn enough to help support the family. Some young women are also brought into a home for domestic employment, but are then expected to act as a wife in terms of sex and child rearing. Victims are often exposed to physical, sexual and verbal abuse, demeaning behavior, and coercion. Sometimes children remain on the street because they are afraid to return to their relative's house.

¶D. Vulnerability. Migration in Sierra Leone is a norm driven by the dire economic situation in the country. Sierra Leone ranks very low on the Human Development Index, including last in terms of maternal/child health and also has the world's highest rate of infant mortality. Children and youth, defined as 15-35 years in age, constitute approximately two-thirds of the country's population of over 6 million. Traumatic experiences during the 1991-2001 war, shattered extended family networks and social structures, and extreme poverty make it much more difficult to protect children.

Within this context, trafficking is difficult to combat, because impoverished parents face difficult decisions with regards to how to care for and educate their children. Cultural norms, as well, add to the complexity. Child fostering, for example, by placing children with wealthier relatives, is common. While many children benefit from such arrangements and receive education and assistance that they would have lacked had they remained at home, it is a system that is vulnerable to abuse and can lead to trafficking.

Many young women are also vulnerable in this unstable economic environment. Unemployment in both the urban and rural regions has created a state of desperation for women and their families. Many trafficking victims in Sierra Leone are either "war widows" or were formally abducted during the war to be used as "war wives," and are now considered undesirable by men in their communities. These women and their families are often eager to accept any offers to alleviate poverty, whether it is through marriage proposals, employment or educational opportunities.

The deaf population is also particularly vulnerable due to lack of income-generating opportunities and their inability to speak out about abuse.

¶E. Traffickers. Relatives, family friends, and other individuals with power in the community reportedly traffic children to Freetown and other urban areas with false promises to parents that the children will be sent to school. Women are reportedly trafficked in a similar way, with promises of marriage or employment. Internal trafficking of this kind does not require travel documents, and given the porous nature of the borders throughout West Africa, even trafficking in and out of Sierra Leone can often be conducted with little to no documentation.

There have been no reports of large international organized crime syndicates, marriage brokers, or employment, adoption, travel or tourism agencies conducting trafficking activities in Sierra Leone, though some service providers suspect there may be a presence.

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GoSL Anti-TIP Efforts  
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¶A. Acknowledgment. The government acknowledges that trafficking is a problem. However, the country continues to

suffer severe ramifications from a civil war during which it was a failed state. There is an overwhelming lack of capacity in the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL), and many competing critical needs. The government is effectively bankrupt, with donors continuing to provide a majority of the country's budget. However, donor interest in Sierra Leone is gradually decreasing as the country is ever furthered removed from headlines. Corruption is entrenched. The police, judiciary, and social-welfare institutions are critically understaffed, have very limited budgets, and have trouble meeting their basic mandates. While the government identifies that TIP is an issue, finding resources and building capacity to combat the problem will remain a serious problem well into the future.

1B. Agencies. The MOSWGCA and SLP take the lead on anti-trafficking efforts in Sierra Leone, and the Ministry of Justice is the designated co-chair with the MOSWGCA of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trafficking and the TIP Task Force. The Inter-Ministerial Committee also includes the Ministries of Education, Internal Affairs, Information, Labor, Health, Foreign Affairs, Local Government, Youth, and Tourism. The TIP Task Force includes representatives from all ministries in the Inter-Ministerial Committee as well as the Principal Immigration Officer, the Commissioner of Police in charge of Crime Services, the Ombudsman, and representatives from civil society and international organizations.

While the anti-trafficking law directly identifies the ministries to be involved, few send representatives to the meetings. One reported reason for lack of government involvement in the Task Force continues to be the issue of payment for attending meetings. Section 7 of the anti-trafficking law stipulates that members of the Task Force should be paid an allowance determined by the MOSWGCA, Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, in consultation with the Minister of Finance. Given that the latter has never provided funding for any anti-trafficking related work, and that the Ministry of Justice is one agency that rarely attends Task Force meetings despite its co-chair status, the issue of payment has never been addressed. It is reported that Ministries will not send representatives since they will not be paid.

The participant ratio for the Task Force has thus become heavily weighted towards international and non-governmental organizations. While their participation is vital to the activities of the Task Force, lack of government participation by all but a few ministries hinders the ability of the Task Force to effectively coordinate and encourage other government efforts. FAAST, with USG funding, has sought to tackle this problem in two ways: First, it has resuscitated and expanded a network of village parent groups that were first established in the period of 2004-06 but had, in absence of donor funding 2006-08, become less active. There are now 38 such groups located in all parts of Sierra Leone, playing a role in identifying and caring for trafficking victims. Second, working with IOM and other NGOs, FAAST has crafted an amendment to the 2005 anti-trafficking law which is intended to centralize trafficking responsibility more clearly in the MOSWGCA. The amendment would disband the inter-ministerial committee, which is at present a logjam, and have the task force report to the MOSWGCA. The amendment would dispense with any payment for attending meetings. It is, however, not clear that the amendment will go forward through numerous bureaucratic obstacles.

1C. Government Limitations. The SLP and MOSWGCA lack sufficient funding to carry out their basic duties. The MOSWGCA at the end of 2009 received a quadrupling of its tiny budget, thanks to energetic activity by its new minister, but this funding remains inadequate to meet basic needs of the ministry. Training for staff on the anti-trafficking law or victim protection is limited and has historically been conducted by non-governmental and international organizations. No government-funded victim services exist, and there are no government-operated shelter services. The

SLP lacks sufficient communications and transportation infrastructure to effectively carry out investigations or support services for victims.

There is some stated political will to combat trafficking in persons, and the increase in the budget of MOSWGCA is a positive sign, but trafficking is only one of many priorities for that ministry.

1D. Government Monitoring. The TIP Task Force, as mandated by the Anti-Trafficking Act passed in 2005, is designated to systematically monitor anti-trafficking efforts (prosecution, prevention, and protection). In 2009, the task force continued to meet every other month. While the anti-trafficking law identifies the ministries to be involved, few send representatives to the meetings. Those that participate regularly on the Task Force, however, such as the MOSWGCA and organizations like IOM, UNICEF, and FAAST, share information about cases and discuss next steps and planned activities.

The lack of adequate government involvement in the Task Force, lack of meetings of the inter-ministerial committee, and lack of GoSL funding to support initiatives that were mandated by the anti-trafficking law mean that coordination remains poor. There is no mechanism in place to adequately give assessments of anti-trafficking efforts. Information is not routinely made public; however, the government does make trafficking-related information available to international organizations, non-government partners, and others upon request.

1E. Establishing Identity. Procedures exist for issuing birth certificates, national identity cards, and passports. However, many identification documents were destroyed during the war and the ID-card issuance process was not re-established effectively until 2009. Therefore, many Sierra Leoneans hold a simple affidavit by which they have self-attested birth and nationality. Passport fraud is a serious problem.

1F. Government Data Capability. No comprehensive statistics on the prevalence of trafficking exist due to communication difficulties with up-country offices, but each organization keeps records of the victims it serves. The Family Support Unit headquarters in Freetown has only begun to use data systems put in place in 2008. Training and resources continue to be sorely needed to establish better documentation-collection and will continue to be needed for the foreseeable future.

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Investigation/Prosecution  
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1A. Existing Laws. Trafficking is first mentioned in the Constitution of Sierra Leone Act no. 6 of 1991. Section 19 states, "No person shall be held in slavery or servitude or be required to perform forced labor or traffic or deal in human beings." Section 20 states, "No person shall be subject to any form of torture or any punishment or other treatment which is inhuman or degrading."

The Anti-Human Trafficking Act was signed in August, 2005 (after considerable efforts by donors and service providers). The law prohibits trafficking for labor, sexual exploitation, illicit removal of human organs, and exploitation during armed conflicts. The law covers both internal and transnational trafficking and is consistent with the Palermo Protocol.

The Child Rights Act was passed in 2007 (also after considerable efforts by donors and service providers) and signed by the President in 2008. This Act brings Sierra Leone into compliance with the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. It includes provisions related to children associated with armed conflict, forced marriage, and exploitive child labor. Child trafficking is mentioned in

Section 60 (1) (k), as a crime that must be investigated by the district council and its child welfare department if identified. Sections 60 (1)(j) and (2) create the same stipulation for investigating incidents involving children living with or associating with known prostitutes, other than their mother.

The Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2005 also supports the Anti-Human Trafficking Act in so far as it criminalizes money or property which is gained through crime. If perpetrators of human trafficking gain money from the act, they will be guilty of an additional crime if they attempt to launder such money by investing it in another financial activity.

Despite the number of laws related to trafficking, many SLP officers revert to using abduction and harboring charges when possible. This is a reflection of both an ill-equipped police force and the cultural environment, which encourages mediation over prosecution.

1B. Punishment of Sex Trafficking. Penalties are the same for trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation. Convicted traffickers face up to ten years of imprisonment, fines of 50 million Leones (approximately \$13,000) and victim restitution costs.

1C. Punishment of Labor Trafficking. All convicted traffickers face up to ten years of imprisonment, fines of 50 million leones (approximately \$13,000) and victim restitution costs.

1D. Rape. Under the Offenses Against the Person Act of 1861, rape of a person over the age of 16 carries a potential penalty of life imprisonment, which is more severe than the penalty for sex trafficking. However, such penalties are rarely brought against perpetrators. Rape is common and viewed more as a societal norm than a criminal problem. The law does not specifically prohibit spousal rape.

1E. Statistics. Due to poor communication with up-country facilities, accurate national statistics are not available. However, FSU reports that it investigated 22 cases of human trafficking between January and December 2009. FSU could provide no further information for 2009. However, it began to use its new database in January 2010 and hopes to have fuller information in the future. FFAST reports that there were 28 trafficking victims handed over to FFAST for special care during 21009, but it estimates that there were 100 victims countrywide who were handled by the newly-formed Voluntary Parent Groups. According to FFAST, there were three convictions of traffickers during 2009 and there were three other cases brought to court, pending a verdict.

1F. Training. The government does not provide specialized training, but does make law enforcement officers and other government officials available to attend training conducted by international organizations and local NGOs. IOM, CVT, UNICEF, and FFAST, among others, provided training to police officers, border guards, and government officials over the past year.

1G. Cooperation with Other Governments. There were reports that the Government of Sierra Leone cooperated with the Government of Liberia on one investigation and repatriation over the last year.

1H. Extradition. The Extradition Act of 1974 allows for extradition of persons subject to crimes committed in the country of the offense, but there have been no requests to extradite a suspect for trafficking. The Extradition Act allows for the extradition of Sierra Leone nationals to other countries for trial.

1I. Government Involvement. There are no known instances of GoSL authorities facilitating trafficking efforts; however, prevalent social attitudes and lack of government capacity and awareness mean that barriers to trafficking are low. Low-level government officials who forge documents such as



birth, marriage, and death certificates rarely suffer punishment, but there is no proof that these forged documents are used to facilitate trafficking. Further, border officials are low-paid and continue to struggle with the concept of trafficking versus smuggling. It is possible that such officials are bribed to enable the easy movement of people and goods, but a direct link between that kind of corruption and trafficking cases has yet to be uncovered or publicized. Additionally, while there have been no cases of government officials intentionally contributing to the problem or participating in the act of trafficking, some SLP officers are suspected of looking the other way, or possibly tipping off high profile perpetrators, to help aid an escape.

J. N/A

K. Peacekeeping. Sierra Leone is new to peacekeeping operations, having sent a company to Darfur in 2009. There have been no reported incidents of trafficking related to this peacekeeping operation.

L. Sex Tourism. Sierra Leone does not have an identified sex tourism problem. Inappropriate sexual conduct by tourists or business people while in the country appears to be opportunistic, and not the purpose of their visit to Sierra Leone. There is no law against prostitution and it is widespread in Sierra Leone. Many women and girls enter into prostitution independently, often due to economic pressures; however, there continue to be allegations that female pimps (kaklat) or relatives recruit girls for prostitution directly from villages. There is also a small cadre of known pimps in the Freetown area, and reports of several brothels in operation, but this is not a dominant characteristic of prostitution in Sierra Leone. Some women who engage in prostitution may be doing so out of desperation to escape from other exploitive situations, such as early marriage or domestic servitude. Though prostitution is legalized, prostitutes are sometimes arrested and charged with loitering or vagrancy.

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Protection/Assistance  
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A. Protection of Victims. The Anti-Trafficking Act requires the government to offer protection for victims and witnesses, though due to a lack of resources, the government relies on NGO service providers to provide physical protection.

B. Victim Care Facilities. Until 2008, IOM provided a shelter in Freetown for trafficking victims of all ages. The government was scheduled to furnish IOM with a new shelter space, which IOM intended to renovate and turn over to the MOSWGCA, hoping MOSWGCA would be able to operate the site. This plan fell through and IOM lost funding, and no shelter exists at present. IOM has sought to avoid being the primary assistance system and is working with the MOSWGCA on the means to fund a shelter under MOSWGCA responsibility.

C. Government Services to Victims. The government does not provide trafficking victims with legal, medical or psychological services, or any funding to organizations that assist trafficking victims. It hosts task force meetings, and participates in the referral system, but does not provide a monetary contribution to any NGO efforts. Government support is nominal, and thus difficult to monetize.

D. Foreign Victims. The government does not provide assistance to foreign trafficking victims, though foreign victims would receive the same services from IOM and other NGOs that domestic victims receive.

E. Long Term. The government does not provide long-term shelter or housing benefits to victims of trafficking.

F. Referral. The FSUs refer victims to the MOSWGCA when cases become known to them (MOSWGCA officers are meant to be located at every FSU but MOSWGCA has not been able to comply

with this legal requirement at many FSUs). Victims are in turn referred to the newly-formed Voluntary Parental Associations and thence, in more severe cases, to FAAST.

¶G. Number of Victims. The FSU database recorded 22 cases of trafficking in 2009, while FAAST recorded direct assistance to 28 victims. Approximately 100 victims have been assisted by the newly-formed Voluntary Parental Groups countrywide. The SLP acknowledges that its statistics underestimate the problem, but have no means of ensuring better reporting by offices in the provinces. FAAST has assisted some victims who have not fallen under the purview of the FSU.

¶H. System to Identify Victims. The government's law enforcement, immigration and social services personnel have a formal protocol to follow to identify victims of trafficking, but only a small number of officials have been trained and know how to follow it. Most high-risk persons (prostitutes, unaccompanied minors or undocumented immigrants) are not screened or identified as victims.

¶I. Rights of Victims. The rights of victims are generally respected, though there is still confusion among authorities on what constitutes trafficking. It is thus likely that many victims fall through the cracks and do not receive the care they require.

¶J. Victim Role. Victims are encouraged to participate in the legal process, but the general inefficiency of the justice sector has frustrated these efforts. While victims are permitted to be active participants in investigations and court proceedings, many lose patience between the period of identification and the case going to trial. This can result in cases being dropped, since most cases cannot be successfully tried without the victim as a witness. The cost of transportation is another deterrent preventing victims from participating fully in a trial, because they must bear the cost of transportation to the court in order to testify.

An additional problem is that social factors often prevent women and children who are victims of sexual and other violence from obtaining justice in the court system. Rape cases, for example, are often settled out of court by male family members. Communities often use traditional forms of justice to address the alleged perpetrators, rather than work through the formal system. Such social factors can serve as a barrier for trafficking victims to access the justice they are entitled to under the anti-trafficking law.

The law does provide for victim restitution, and IOM has worked with several victims to pursue this, but there is yet to be a victim who has received any kind of civil damages for abuse or hardship suffered during their trafficking experience.

¶K. Training. The government does not provide training on identifying trafficking victims, though officials are permitted to attend training sessions offered by NGOs and IOs. The Government does not provide training to its embassies and consulates in foreign countries, nor does it encourage its embassies and consulates to develop ongoing relationships with NGOs that serve trafficking victims.

¶L. Repatriated Victims. The government does not provide assistance to its repatriated nationals, though victims do receive assistance upon arrival from IOM.

¶M. IOs/NGOs and Victims. International organizations and NGOs provide protection services, awareness training, vocational training, and counseling. They include UNICEF, IOM, FAAST, CVT, International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, Defense for Children International, CARITAS, GOAL SL, JSDP, Human Rights Youth Coalition, Don Bosco Fambul, Women in Crisis Movement, Christian in Action Development Agency, FAWE, RADA (Rehabilitation and Development Agency), ENCISS, APEGS (Agriculture Production Extension and General Services), CARD (Community Action for Rural Development), and Journalists for Human Rights. Local authorities generally

cooperate with these organizations as they depend on them to provide services the government cannot afford.

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Prevention  
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1A. Campaigns. The government did not have the resources to conduct anti-trafficking information or education campaigns during the reporting period, but through the TIP Task Force coordinated efforts by FFAST, IOM, and CVT. Primarily with USG funding, these organizations continued to conduct training for police prosecutors and officers, both in the field and at the Cadet Training School, MOSWGCA employees, chiefs, magistrates, faith-based organizations, and local colleges. NGOs also worked extensively with sex workers and targeted communities in boarder and mining regions.

1B. Monitoring Patterns. The government does not appear to monitor immigration and emigration patterns for evidence of trafficking.

1C. Coordination. The TIP Task Force is the primary mechanism for coordination between all relevant agencies, though it is scarcely attended on the government side, outside the primary agency MOSWGCA. The government has a single focal point on TIP within the MOSWGCA, through the TIP Secretariat, that coordinates all anti-TIP efforts. A significant increase in the budget of MOSWGCA in November 2009 (from a quarter million to one million dollars) will hopefully have a small positive impact on the ministry's reach and effectiveness.

The relationship between government officials and organizations is generally a cordial one, though the onus is often placed on non-governmental actors to conduct activities and maintain momentum. The apparent lack of interest by various government ministries creates some tension between organizations working to address TIP and ministries that will not engage on the issue.

1D. Plan of Action. The government has a national plan of action, which was created by the Task Force in conjunction with an ECOWAS consultant in 2007, but it has languished due to a lack of support, funding, and resources within the MOSWGCA. In 2009, Sierra Leone signed the Regional Policy on the Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons approved by the regional grouping of West African states ECOWAS.

1E. Government Measures against Commercial Sex Acts. The government has not taken efforts during the reporting period to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts.

1F. Government Measures against Child Sex Tourism. The government has not taken efforts during the reporting period to reduce participation in international child sex tourism by nationals of Sierra Leone.

1G. Peacekeeping Measures. The Government of Sierra Leone did not conduct screening for the personnel it deployed to the UN mission in Darfur. However, various types of US-sponsored training were conducted in preparation for this deployment, all of which required Leahy human-rights vetting. Therefore, within the eight months leading up to the unit's departure, virtually everyone was vetted at one time or another, to include the unit's commander.

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Partnerships  
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1A. Other Governments, Multilateral, Civil Society. The government has not undertaken bilateral arrangements with other governments specific to trafficking. Sierra Leonean civil society, while active on human-rights issues, has not specifically organized itself on trafficking.

1B. International Assistance to Other Governments. N/A



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Child Soldiers  
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Since the conclusion of war in 2001, during which use of children as soldiers was common, Sierra Leone has been assiduous in monitoring the age of recruits into the armed forces, to ensure they are over 18.

CHESHES